

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on Forests & Forest Health

Witness Testimony

May 18 1999

Testimony to the House of Representatives
Committee on Resources,
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health,
Honorable Helen Chenoweth, Chairman.

By:

Dale E. Anderson, President
Pennsylvania Forest Industry Association
1 Washington Street
Ridgway, PA 15853
Elk County, Pennsylvania
814 776 1883

Testimony pertains to:

The effects of The Endangered Species Act, the Appeals Process, and the current management direction of our Allegheny National Forest and other National Forests which has contributed to declining forest health, battered rural communities, and worldwide environmental degradation.

I want to thank the Honorable Helen Chenoweth, for allowing us to testify at this hearing today. I also extend my thanks the rest of the committee.

My name is Dale Anderson. I am the President of the Pennsylvania Forest Industry Association. This is a grassroots organization of people that work in the forest industry and other citizens, organized since 1963. I am testifying as the President of Pennsylvania Forest Industry Association.

The timber resources of our National Forest system, including the Allegheny National Forest are slowly and quietly deteriorating due to a lack of forest management. The present policies of the Forest Service contribute to the decline of the health of the forest, batter the rural communities, and contribute to world wide ecologic problems by exporting our demands for forest products to other countries with low environmental priorities.

My history with the Allegheny National Forest started with my high school days. I worked for a couple of years on the fire control team. Later, I worked on the Allegheny doing timber stand

improvement. It was this experience that led me on to a degree in Forestry from the West Virginia University.

The investments made in the 1960's by the Forest Service to improve these timber stands are now becoming ripe. For us to disregard these investments is not fair to the people of this country.

While attending college, I worked as a Fire Control Aid on the St. Joe National Forest in the beautiful State of Idaho. I have fond memories of my summer in your great state, Madam Chairman.

I have had experience with, and been an observer of the US Forest Service, in the East and in the West, over a long period of time.

Over time, we have seen a steady escalation in the cost of administering all National Forests. Due to tree species of high demand and high value on the Allegheny, we can still operate in a fashion to cover costs and return money to the United States Treasury and to the schools and townships of Warren, Forest, Elk, and McKean Counties.

The latest numbers I have for FY 1998 on the Allegheny, show income of about \$23.2 million. Almost all of this revenue is from timber harvesting. One-fourth of this money, or about \$5.8 million was returned to townships and schools in four northwestern Pennsylvania counties.

Over this same time period, income of \$105,000 was generated from recreation or special use permits. Some people have said that we can replace the dollars from sustainable timber harvesting with recreation dollars. On the Allegheny, we will need to increase recreation by about 220 times to replace the return from timber. Or, the current fees will need to be raised by a factor of 220 to replace the timber revenue.

We do not think that this will occur due to the limits of reality and the economic law of diminishing returns. There is absolutely no replacement for the energy, the vitality, and the activity generated from the sustainable harvest of forest crops.

We are seeing many examples of large, beautiful, high value black cherry and red oak trees lying horizontal and rotting on the ground. These trees have been brought down by high wind. This is nothing new. It has been going on as long as we have had wind and trees. What is new is the total lack of ability of the people now running the forest to do anything about it. It is a shame to let the people's high-value resources rot on the ground.

The Forest Service tells us that "we are working on it, we need more money, and as soon as we get this or that study done, we will act" The evidence is that the Allegheny National Forest is becoming an area full of dead trees that look like skeletons with bark and limbs falling off. Reproduction of desired tree species is delayed or impossible and an industry is going

elsewhere for raw material.

The unique forest resource ecosystem of the Allegheny National Forest is very fragile and is not sustainable without active forest management. The way to sustain this asset for the American people, for our children, and for our children's children is to actively manage the Forest.

Presently, we have a bat. One Indiana Bat ... on a road trip. He has since made an appearance in Vermont. This gets the Fish and Wildlife Service involved. We have too many agencies with similar missions.

I ask you, if we have a half-million Indiana bats, are they really endangered? Or is the Endangered Species Act being used for some goal other than to protect endangered species? Does one bat indicate habitat or an intentional stocking of that bat? The Endangered Species Act is flawed and needs to be fixed.

The Allegheny National Forest, Madam Chairman. is beginning to resemble the demise of the goose that laid golden eggs.

Please fix the appeals process. Every project since 1991 on the ANF, and almost all other National Forests, has been tied up by appeals. Forest health declines, resources are wasted, we export our demand, gridlock rules, and the employees become demoralized.

The Forest Service needs primacy over the critters and fauna that inhabit the lands they administer.

Please use peer reviewed science to manage our National Forests.

The Pennsylvania Forest Industry Association appreciates this opportunity to testify before this committee. We welcome any questions or comments.

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